



Corps Bridge Saves Lives



An Afghan villager walks across the old bridge in the province of Laghman.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of History

The success of the bridges and the self-help program were early tributes to the Corps' efforts to improve the everyday lives of the Afghan people.

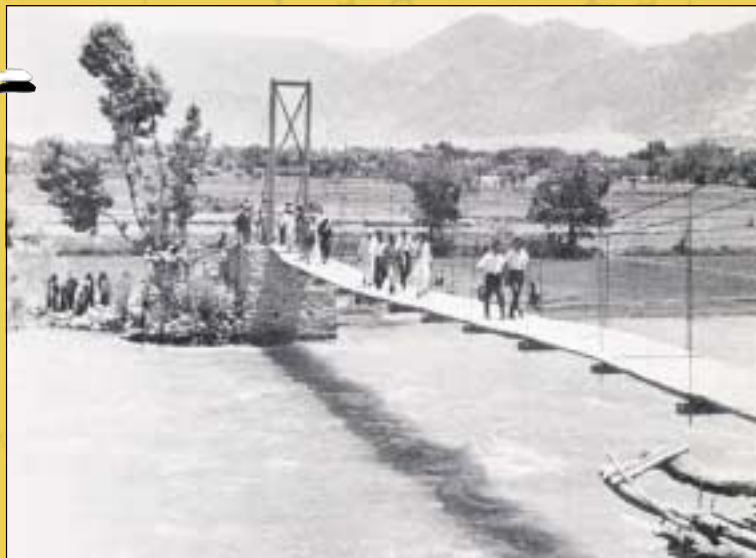
DURING the 1960s the U.S. Agency for International Development sought assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in overcoming a hazardous situation in the Afghan province of Laghman.

While making their way to market or school, many Afghan villagers risked falling to their deaths while attempting to cross flooded rivers on antiquated and unstable bridges. The Corps' Mediterranean Division's Area Engineer office designed a new type of bridge to solve the problem. Also, in an effort to allow for future construction, the engineers ensured all building materials except for the cables and connectors were locally obtainable.

The design of the bridge was simple and easily replicated. Steel cables replaced old rope. The maximum load was 1,000 pounds per 3-meter section — based on the approximate weight of a loaded donkey with a 2.8 meters clear width. Engineers

designed two bridge variations — one strictly for pedestrian and animal crossing, and another that would allow vehicle crossing.

The first suspension bridge was built for less than \$1,000, and timing of its emplacement was fortuitous. An old man nicknamed "the Cricket" had been maintaining a decrepit older bridge. Prior to the new bridge's



Villagers line up to cross the newly completed "Cricket Bridge" designed by the Corps' Mediterranean Division's Area Engineer office.

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completion, "the Cricket" fell from the bridge and drowned. Soon after his death a flood washed out the old bridge.

Two additional bridges were later constructed in the province. The success of the bridges and the self-help program were early tributes to the Corps' efforts to improve the everyday lives of the Afghan people. □



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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' website at www.hq.usace.army.mil/history

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